

Fall 2012

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## KDWCD Vision Statement

Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District's vision is to protect, conserve, and maintain the Kaweah Basin's water resources through actively pursuing a comprehensive understanding of the region's water resources and through the management of those resources to their fullest potential. The District strives to achieve its vision by engaging in the following core directives:

- Monitoring water resources and demands
- Conserving and enhancing available water resources, both local and regional,
- Investigating and evaluating the Region's water resources,
- Conserving and protecting Kaweah Basin water rights,
- Preventing the interference with/or diminutions of natural flow, and
- Protecting lands from flood or overflow

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# K A W E A H D E L T A Water Conservation D I S T R I C T



## **ILRP Update—Regional Board Aims for More Groundwater Regulations**

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board continues to set its sights on groundwater monitoring throughout the Central Valley as part of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program that it manages.

Its conclusion to include discharges to groundwater ensures that virtually all irrigated agricultural operations will fall under the ILRP, and the amended program begins with the assumption that every irrigator is a discharger simply with the inclusion of groundwater.

The draft order for the Tulare Lake Basin, of which the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition is a part, expands into groundwater, requiring more monitoring and assessments.



Once the Coalition has been identified as the area's third party representative under the new order, it has one year to prepare a groundwater assessment report that will require an examination of groundwater conditions and vulnerability to contamination from irrigated agricultural operations. The groundwater assessments report requires that high and low vulnerability areas are identified based on the multiple variables, including crops, soil types, management practices, depth to groundwater readings, and the like. Within that report, the Coalition is proposing a monitoring strategy that will meet two monitoring elements: trend and representative monitoring.

*Trend monitoring* is conceptualized as providing monitoring reports once per year from shallow existing production wells at a density based on vulnerability to pollution. The Regional Board is suggesting that vulnerability areas are identified as "low" with one well per township and "high" with four wells per township.

*Representative monitoring* is intended to evaluate the efficiency of existing best management practices and controlling nitrates. The concept lacks definition based on the multitude of variables, including crops grown, soil types, and farming practices for example. The Regional Board is suggesting that monitoring sites be selected that are representative of the broader community. The Coalition is seeking more definition of this concept because, as stated, it could mean that representative monitoring requires hundreds of special studies because of all

the variables previously mentioned.

The Coalition is presently working on an implementation plan that will start with a comprehensive assessment of existing groundwater conditions. It offers a two-phase approach. The first phase would involve collecting data, performing initial trend monitoring, and gathering current relevant information to characterize groundwater conditions, instead of relying on previously collected and questionable data. Once vulnerability areas are determined, special studies and analyses would be conducted around the prioritized highest vulnerability areas.

The Coalition members also are working with major commodity groups and fertilizer manufacturers to conduct studies and monitoring of

management practices for various crops, fertilizer movement, attenuation and denitrification, which is what happens to the fertilizer after it leaves the root zone. Coalition members and representatives from several agricultural commodity groups toured with the State Water Resources Control Board's Executive Officer, Pamela Creedon, on Oct. 11 and met with her on Oct. 12 to discuss key issues and concerns contained in the draft Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR).

The Eastside San Joaquin Order, which will be the basis for establishing all other orders including the Southern San Joaquin, is being rewritten by Regional Board staff and should be available for public review in early November. The Regional Board will conduct a workshop in Kern County on Nov. 30 to take public comment on the rewrite of the Eastside Order and to discuss the proposals developed through the agricultural commodity and Coalition process. The Eastside Order is calendared for consideration by the State Board on Dec. 7; the Southern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Order is currently on calendar for adoption in April 2013.

With respect to the court cases that were filed challenging the adequacy of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessment for the ILRP, both the environmental lawsuit (filed in Alameda County) and the Coalition's lawsuit (filed in Sacramento County) have been consolidated in Sacramento County courts. The Coalition exercised its right to remove a judge and attorneys are presently developing the case. The lawsuit should be heard sometime in 2013.



**California's Water Future – Are We Ready?**

Nearly two years ago, the California government began touting an \$11.1-billion bond to upgrade the state's water system. Called the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act, the bond contained several specific spending proposals, including:

- ⇒ \$455 million for drought relief projects, disadvantaged communities and small community wastewater treatment improvements, and a safe drinking water revolving fund;
- ⇒ \$1.4 billion for 'integrated regional water management projects;
- ⇒ \$2.25 billion for projects that "support delta sustainability options";
- ⇒ \$3 billion for water storage projects;
- ⇒ \$1.7 billion for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in 21 watersheds;
- ⇒ \$1 billion for groundwater protection and cleanup;
- ⇒ \$1.25 billion for water recycling and advanced treatment technology project;
- ⇒ \$2 billion in "pork projects" were included solely to secure votes for the bond's passage.

While the bond originally was certified to appear on the November 2010 ballot, it was removed and placed on the 2012 ballot, a move that seemed positive at that time, in terms of public support.

A statewide public opinion poll commissioned by the Association of California Water Agencies in November 2011 determined that 75 percent of California's population was concerned about the state's water supply. The poll placed water supply issues in the second tier of issues of concern to Californians at a time when voter concerns were dominated by the economy and jobs.

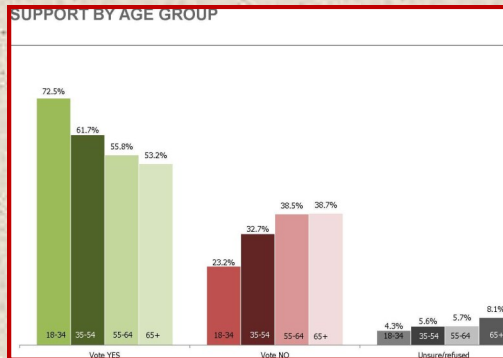
Additionally, an overwhelming majority of Californians, 84 percent, agreed that the state has major water problems, and that California must make major investments to upgrade and modernize our water system to ensure reliable water now and in the future. And six in ten voters, or 62 percent, believed that investing billions of dollars in a state water bond package would be worth it to ensure reliable water supplies now and into the future.

Despite this seeming support, however, the California State Legislature in July approved a bill that removed the water bond from the 2012 ballot, and instead places it on the 2014 ballot. This action occurred because the Democratic majority in the state legislature wants to create as favorable an environment as possible to ensure that the Governor's \$8-billion tax measure, Proposition 30, has a good chance of passing in November. Having both a tax increase measuring and a borrowing measure for the bond seemed incompatible. Now that the water bond has been moved out another two years, it begs the question: will Californians still care in 2014?

A recent poll conducted in January by California public research firm Probolsky Research found that 60 per-

cent of the respondents would still support the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act if it were on the ballot this year.

The Probolsky poll results were presented at the Southern California Water Committee's quarterly meeting in January. Another area of interest being polled was California voters' knowledge of the Bay-Delta, the largest estuary on the West Coast. The Bay-Delta also serves as both the state's and federal government's primary water conveyance system, sending freshwater to 25 million Californians throughout the entire state.



While the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District does not directly receive water that comes through the Bay-Delta, as a federal water contractor, the issue is of importance. "Our surface water supply, with respect to our federal contract, is more for supplemental water when it is available within the Friant Unit of the Central Valley Project," said Shane Smith, Project Manager for the District. "The Friant Unit is distinct and situated entirely here on the east side of the valley, in the San Joaquin River watershed of the Sierra Nevada mountains."

"Our interest in the Bay-Delta is to encourage ongoing, reliable water supplies for all of California, including our neighbors who receive those surface supplies. Water supply reductions for those around us certainly have the potential to impact our groundwater resources. We are concerned because the Bay-Delta is vulnerable and its long-term reliability is questionable."

When asked what they knew about the Bay-Delta, 78 percent of the Probolsky poll respondents said they knew nothing about it. Indeed, some of the verbatim responses showed a complete ignorance of the Bay-Delta and its importance to the state's water supply system. "I know absolutely nothing" and "It's the oil pipeline from Canada to the United States", among other responses, show a relatively low awareness of the Bay-Delta.

"With California looking at making major investments in water infrastructure, polling shows that significant education needs to be done about the Delta and our water supply. Regardless of whether voters say they support a bond today, there is clearly a need for greater voter understanding of the role and impact of water infrastructure in the state," said Adam Probolsky, Chairman and CEO of Probolsky Research.

In May the Public Policy Institute of California released a report that also tackled the issue of California's water supply. It identified catastrophic disruptions in the water supply, as well as continuing uncertainty about the reliability of water supplies, as two of the most significant issues of concern for the state's water. The other significant issues include declining groundwater basins, and the increasing risk of catastrophic floods.

While the state's water bond has now been put off for two more years – at the 2014 November general election – it's important for all Californians to understand the issues that affect their water supply. The last time California voters approved a water bond with in 2006 with the passage of Proposition 84. That measure authorized \$5.4 billion in spending on water projects throughout the state.



**Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Grant Update**

Thanks to a state grant of \$235,254, the Kaweah River Basin's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan will now begin planning efforts to address regional governance, water supply, and a salt management proposal.

The Planning Grant, made available through Proposition 84 funds, will be used to help supplement the Kaweah River Basin's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWM), and to enhance regional planning efforts. Proposition 84, passed by California voters in 2006, provides \$1 billion for IRWM planning and implementation.

An IRWM is a collaborative effort to manage all aspects of water resources in a region. The plans cross jurisdictional, watershed, and political boundaries, involve multiple agencies, stakeholders, individuals, and groups; and attempt to address the issues and differing perspectives of all involved entities through mutually beneficial solutions. The Kaweah River Basin IRWM was established in 2007 through the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding.

**Governance Enhancement**

The grant will be used to develop a new system of governance for the IRWMP. While Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District has taken the lead role on the IRWMP because of its historical knowledge and abilities, a governing structure that is self-supporting with funding participation by all involved agencies will offer a more formalized process for setting priorities and making decisions. The planning effort will use the governance concepts developed by the Kaweah River Basin IWRMP group and subcommittee meeting to propose, review, and ultimately adopt a new governance structure.

**Delta Dependent Water Supply Vulnerability**

While the Kaweah River Basin service area receives little surface water directly from the Bay-Delta, the reduced water supply reliability associated with Bay-Delta water exports is having a significant impact on the area's regional water balance, and the sustainability of regional groundwater supplies. The planning grant will be used to analyze the range of current and future Bay-Delta originated water supplies, and will estimate the range of

future impacts assuming that Delta exports remain limited. This type of analysis will allow the Kaweah River Basin IRWM group to reprioritize their plan based on the regional impacts, and will allow the group to pursue a plan to mitigate these impacts.

**San Joaquin River-Sourced Water Supply Vulnerability**

Significant reductions in water supply to the Kaweah River Basin area could occur because of legally-mandated restoration flows in the San Joaquin River to support a natural, sustainable, anadromous fishery. While the San Joaquin River restoration efforts have an additional goal to minimize water supply impacts, planning efforts are underway to mitigate those impacts, including improvements to facilities to allow for increased diversions of floodwater from the San Joaquin River. The planning grant will allow the Kaweah River Basin group to quantify impacts already experienced to this water supply since March 2009 when the river settlement enacted, and would estimate the range of future impacts assuming full and limited mitigation. These analyses will allow the Kaweah River Basin group to pursue a plan to mitigate these impacts, and to develop a strategic mitigation plan for reduced San Joaquin River surface water imports.

**Regional Salinity Management**

Salt happens, and in the Kaweah River Basin service area, the accumulation of salts occurs as a result of crop and landscape evapotranspiration, the addition of soil amendments and fertilizers, the treatment of drinking water supplies for hardness, wastewater discharges, and other sources. While the Kaweah River Basin group does not believe there is a regulatory role for its plan, they do believe that a coordinated approach between its IRWM efforts and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board would result in a greater potential for improvement. The Regional Board organized the Central Valley Salts Program, designed to address valley-wide salinity issues. The Regional Board also oversees the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, which monitors and addresses non-point source pollution impacts to regional surface and groundwater. The grant will help the planning effort to assess the vulnerability of the region to the potential future range of impacts associated with regional salinization.

**King Basin Project will Provide More Groundwater Reserves**

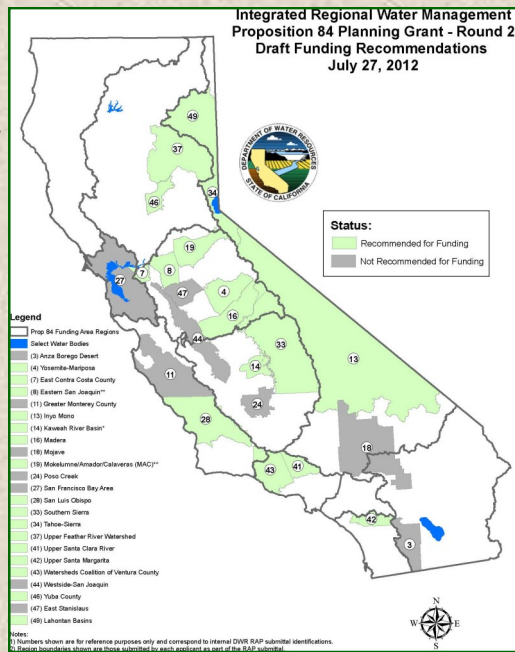
A 24-acre multipurpose facility soon will provide for additional groundwater recharge, as well as floodwater layoff thanks to a recent land purchase by Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District.

Known as the King Basin Project, improvements to the property will include the excavation of two off-stream basins and the construction of associated basin inlet structures, as well as an in-stream control structure within Johnston Slough.

"Groundwater is a precious resource and one that must be maintained," said Shane Smith, Project Manager for Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District. "Recharge projects are a win-win for everyone, by

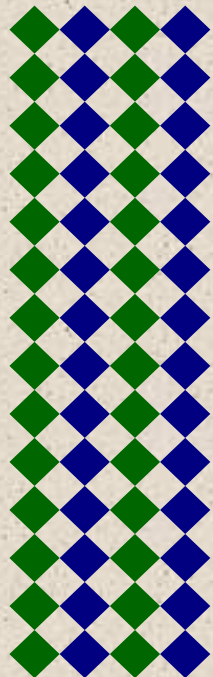
allowing water to percolate to the groundwater basin for replenishment of what's been used, or to bank for use at a later time."

The King Basin Project's location, provides easy access to surface water conveyance facilities, since it is located north and adjacent to Consolidated Peoples Ditch, and Johnson Slough runs east and west through the middle of the property. Only minor developments will be needed on the property, which has high soil infiltration rates. Because there is little land disturbance required, environmental impacts are minimal. The District already has completed its Subsurface Soil Investigation, Environmental Assessment, and Wetlands Delineation.



**Kaweah River Basin IRWM Members**

- Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District
- County of Tulare
- City of Tulare
- City of Visalia
- City of Lindsay
- Tulare Irrigation District
- Exeter Irrigation District
- Lakeside Irrigation Water District





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Visit our website at [www.kdwcd.com](http://www.kdwcd.com) for more information!

***We here at the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District hope you have found the information in this issue of the KDWCD Water Report helpful. It is our goal to provide water resource information that is relevant and useful to those who live, work and farm in the District. As our District strives to protect and enhance the groundwater resources of the Kaweah River Basin, we also would like the landowners, water users and the general public to be informed and knowledgeable about our water resources, so that together we can make the best use of our water now and into the future.***

**Water/Weather Related Web Links**

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| California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) - <a href="http://www.cimis.water.ca.gov">www.cimis.water.ca.gov</a> | Friant Water Authority (FWA) - <a href="http://www.friantwater.org">www.friantwater.org</a>           |
| National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) - <a href="http://www.noaa.gov">www.noaa.gov</a>                              | United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) - <a href="http://www.usbr.gov">www.usbr.gov</a>           |
| United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) - <a href="http://www.usace.army.mil">www.usace.army.mil</a>                       | Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) - <a href="http://www.acwa.com">www.acwa.com</a>      |
| California Department of Water Resources (DWR) - <a href="http://www.water.ca.gov">www.water.ca.gov</a>                          | Water Education Foundation (WEF) - <a href="http://www.watereducation.org">www.watereducation.org</a> |

**Agricultural Water Management Resources**

- CA Agricultural Technology Institute** - A non-profit, educational institution dedicated to improving California agriculture
- Irrigation and Training Research Center** - An irrigation teaching program through outside activities specializing in training, research, and technical support
- National Weather Service** - Provides forecasts and warnings for the central U.S.
- CA Water Institute** - Offers seminars and classes dealing with Regional Water Issues, Irrigation Technology, and Research
- UC Ag Extension** - Includes farm, nutrition, family and consumer science advisors based in more than 50 county offices, reaching millions of farmers, businesses and residents every year
- Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT)** - As an independent research and testing facility, CIT assists designers, manufacturers and users of irrigation equipment to make the technological advances required for our growing and ever changing world. Provides pump efficiency testing
- USDA Farm Service Agency** - Provides contact information as well as a listing of the programs and offices that make up the Farm Service Agency
- USDA/ARS Water Management Research Laboratory** - The development of water and weed management technologies and practices for irrigated agriculture in water deficit areas that use water efficiently, improve agricultural productivity, sustainability and reduce negative environmental impacts
- Farm Advisors Office, Agricultural Commissioners' Offices, Tulare and Kings Counties**